



March 4, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Subcommittee,

I am writing to ask you to **oppose the elimination of Family School Connection funding**, as proposed in the current budget package. This evidence-based, extensively researched, intensive Home-Visitation program is an important support for many of our State's Elementary School children who are at-risk for school failure. The program, operated by The Children's Trust Fund, reaches those children and their families where they spend 80% of their time...in their homes and neighborhoods. It supports parents so they can best support their children in the home and in school. It has been shown to be effective in improving children's school readiness and, in so doing, it can help to close the State's achievement gap.

As a member of The Junior League of Hartford, I am proud to say we were a founding partner of the Family School Connection program. We researched, designed, implemented and oversaw this Home Visitation program in its first 7 years. From those early years until now, evaluations from the University of Hartford School of Social Research have clearly demonstrated that parents enrolled in the Family School Connection program become more involved in their children's life and education. Working with children and their parents in their homes is a cost effective way to build children's skills, strengthen parenting skills, improve the home environment and help parents understand the critical role they play in supporting their children as they move through school. An unsupported child in even the best prepared and enriched classroom still has an uphill battle to succeed in school.

Family School Connection Home Visitors get to know parents, children and families better in their homes than they ever could in an office. They are able to help solve specific problems in the home, creating a supportive home environment and a stronger, more durable family. They are able to identify and strengthen specific parenting skills, and guide parents in supporting their children's education and participation in school. The program helps reduce school absences, improve grades and improve children's behavior. It also helps reduce the incidences of childhood maltreatment and neglect.

Investing in this voluntary, proven, Home Visitation-based program is a cost effective way to break negative cycles, strengthen families and ultimately benefit state budgets. I urge you to preserve Family School Connection.

Sincerely,

Wendy Avery
Junior League of Hartford member